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which you maintain to be the basis of your claims, and then show, from those early writings which we possess, that their authors did really, by their own words, give to them that interpretation which you now give. This you will not attempt to do.

In point of fact, what I am now requiring is the only proof, by your own principles, open to you. For, you do not permit men to exercise their own judgment upon those passages of Scripture which contain articles of faith. Infallibility you cannot assume when called on to prove it. Take, then, now, the questions at issue in our present discussion, the infallibility of, either Church or Pontiff—which it be, or whether it be of both, you have nowhere yet decided—take your present doctrine of the Pontiff's supreme jurisdiction of power over the whole Church of Christ. How will you proceed in the Scriptural proof? What is your rule for the interpretations of the passages you adduce? It must be one of three things. The natural judgment of men duly exercising the same reason which they use in all matters of practical importance; or it must be infallibility interpreting them; or the universal authority of the Fathers testifying, by their united sanction, to the truth of your present interpretation.

But the first of these methods you prohibit; the second you cannot assume when called on to prove it. You have, therefore, nothing left but to test the truth of your doctrines by the only criterion which remains, and which you assert to exist—the according and universal consent of the Fathers.

Here again your pretensions have driven you into a fatal difficulty. If your Church did not assert that there really was such an according witness from the earliest times—if she did not allege that there really was a flowing stream of consent testimony to the truth of her doctrines—it is manifest she would have no proof at all left her. Such testimony she does assert; and she has succeeded in imposing upon her members the reception of an assertion instead of the truth of a fact. She has so jumbled together infallibility with assertion, that her members do not distinguish. They take her infallibility not only as a guarantee for interpretations of Scripture, but likewise as proof for the truth of historic allegations. They do not limit the claim to the proof of doctrines from the Bible, but believe, moreover, that she is as infallible when asserting a fact, as when deriving a doctrine; as a witness or as an interpreter.

My present position is this—your pretensions have forced you to make a claim which is fatal to you. Equally fatal would it have been had you not made it. Prohibiting the exercise of private judgment upon passages of Scripture containing articles of faith debarred from assuming infallibility when called on to prove it, you had no option, because no other proof of your pretensions, but the dogmatic averment that there really did exist one united voice of all antiquity deposing to the truth of your doctrines. Nothing less than this could prove your case. It would not do simply to say that some Fathers held your views; for if there was any difference of opinion among them, this would be to let in what you, with so much worldly wisdom, so well prohibit—private judgment. Hence, you were constrained, by your position, and because of your pretensions, to hazard the daring assertion, that there really did exist—that full proof can be produced of its existence—the consent authority of the Fathers deposing, with full unanimity, to the existence of your modern doctrines in the Church of Christ from the earliest period. This you do assert; this you do teach; and this I shall now put you to prove in the two questions which we are at present discussing; and here I say your pretensions will fall by their own weight.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

ARE THE PRIESTHOOD SINCERE?

[We have great pleasure in presenting to our readers a translation of the following letter from the Abbé Miel, which we think valuable, not only as coming from the pen of one intimately acquainted with the state of the priesthood in France, of which he was so lately a distinguished member, but as evincing the same spirit of Christian moderation which rendered his former letter, published in our September number, so touchingly interesting.]

(TRANSLATION.)

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—I have every day occasion to observe that many evangelical Christians are persuaded that the greater part of the Roman Catholic priesthood are wanting in sincerity, and do not themselves believe in what they are commissioned to teach to others. That it may be so, more or less, in Protestant countries, is possible, though I am not aware of it. But as concerning the countries where the Roman system is dominant, and especially as concerning France, of which the clergy everywhere enjoy particular and deserved consideration, I know, and owe it to truth, as well as to justice, to say, that the clergy in general do not feel the least doubt with regard to the doctrines which they preach in the name of Rome. How that comes to pass, and what is the nature of that sincerity, it will not be difficult nor,

perhaps, needless to explain, and such is the object of this letter.

If there be any one point of its organisation in which the Church of Rome shows herself particularly skilful, it is beyond contradiction in the education of her clergy. You cannot imagine how marvellously everything is combined in order to fix firmly in the intellect and affections of candidates for orders what is called faith—faith, be it remarked, not in our Saviour, nor in Scripture, but faith in the Church herself. What precautions are taken to prevent a doubt from reaching the understanding, or to repel it victoriously if ever it should present itself there! The principles inculcated in young candidates for holy orders, the lessons given to them, the books placed in their hands, every thing concurs and tends to the same object. And these operations are certain of success, because they are directed against simple, unsuspicious souls, who, as it were, lend themselves of their own accord, without resistance, to the impressions. The seminaries are recruited, in fact, from the country districts. The pupils are, for the most part, children of the lower orders, who have attracted attention by their happy disposition, by their assiduity in attending religious ceremonies, and by the docility they display to the lessons of the priests. When they quit their families to enter the first or lower seminaries they certainly have but little knowledge of religion. This, however, they know perfectly well (for they have been taught it from their infancy), that in order to be Christians they must believe firmly, and under pain of damnation, everything which is believed and taught by the Roman Church. And as they have been equally taught that the Church means the parish priest and every priest approved by the bishop, they have an unbounded reliance in the word of the priest. The priest is in their eyes a man altogether beyond and above the rest of mankind, he exercises over them all the ascendancy not only of learning and virtue, of which they form to themselves a very high opinion, but of a celestial mission of a divine nature. They listen to him as the oracle of God, not admitting the possibility of deceiving them, or of his deceiving himself. His lessons are the more impressive from being given with all the force of simple affirmations—“That is so;” “That is not so.” So far is this carried, that they have not even an idea of a religious discussion or controversy. Even in the world, in which they are received before their admission to the college, and where they again appear from time to time during the vacations, no discussion is ever heard upon these subjects. By common agreement, in all Roman Catholic countries, the study of religion is considered the business exclusively of the priest, the believer has only to gather at the foot of the pulpit the fruits of that study. The few exceptions which might be produced against this rule would only serve to establish its truth.

Nevertheless, when the understanding of the pupil of the seminary is a little more developed—when he commences to make use of his own judgment in the domain of natural science—it sometimes happens that reason endeavours to vindicate her right to be heard in matters of religion also, and seeks to qualify the doctrine presented to her as alone containing eternal truth. But the confessor is ever at hand to guard his spiritual son against this dangerous snare. Reason is silenced as being merely the voice of pride; or else is deluded by the promise of having her suggestions examined at another stage, during the term of study at the upper seminary.

At last arrives the solemn epoch, in which the theological education is completed—an epoch the most critical of all. If the edifice of belief does not crumble then, it is usually fixed for ever. Every history which is not in every point in perfect harmony with the doctrine of Rome is strictly forbidden. Even Bailie's *Treatise on Theology*, which has for a number of years been almost exclusively used in our seminaries in France, has just been placed in the index of forbidden works, on the ground that it does not profess *Ultramontanum* with sufficient openness. This is the doctrine which must, at any sacrifice, prevail. Whether knowingly or not, the teachers do not hesitate, with this object in view, to mis-state facts and to misquote texts, as I shall soon have occasion to demonstrate. And yet, upon the slightest reflection, how flimsy are the foundations upon which is reared so colossal a structure!—how weak the arguments!—how inconclusive the evidence!

Well then, would you believe it, the circumstance which ought to shake the faith of the neophyte is precisely that which in most cases serves to fix it. Taking this proposition as a starting point, which they deem exempt even from the possibility of attack—viz., that whatever is taught in the name of Rome is infallibly true, the argument proceeds thus:—“Reason is inadequate to demonstrate such or such a truth; faith, therefore, is a matter of necessity.” And, closing their eyes, they precipitate themselves into the bosom of a faith justly called blind.

It is an analogous reasoning to what I have often heard repeated by sincere Roman Catholics after visiting the eternal city. Deeply affected by the scandals of every description pervading the city of the Pontiffs,

they deduced from these very scandals a proof of the divine nature of the Church of Rome, and of the permanent protection afforded to it by the Holy Ghost, alleging it to be manifest that that Church could not, without such protection, exist for an hour in the midst of such corruptions.

Nor is this all, although it would be something, no doubt, to have thus brought the young student in theology to admit as a necessity this belief in the Church. But, after having thoroughly impressed the idea in his mind that a simple doubt kills faith—after having exhibited in the most hideous colours all who have ever shaken off the yoke of Rome—then they extol beyond all measure the excellence of an humble submission to the authority of the priest—or what they term “*foi de charbonnier*” [faith of a charcoal burner—i.e., of an uncultivated, ignorant person]. Such a submission is incessantly placed before the pupil as the basis of all virtue, as the source of every grace, and of every light; and the result is that the neophyte, terrified and cajoled in turns, throws himself unhesitatingly into the extreme opinions opposite to that from which he has been warned. Not only does the shadow of a doubt terrify him—he flies from it as he would from the serpent of impurity. For this is another rule incessantly impressed upon him, that temptations against faith are to be placed in the same category as temptations against chastity: that the only security against such is in flight. Nay, he even goes beyond this—he at last comes to love faith for itself, and for the love of faith to despise, I had almost said to hate, reason. He persuades himself that there is supreme merit in believing without proof; he does not desire to examine, or to be convinced by any examination which he may make—he would rather preserve all the merits of an unreasoning assent.

I have read in the life of St. Louis [Louis IX. of France], that when some of his courtiers came to announce a miracle which he might have an opportunity of witnessing, by which our Lord showed himself visibly in the consecrated host, under the form of a child, the pious monarch replied—“Let those who doubt concerning the real presence in the holy sacrament go and see this miracle: for myself, I believe in that Presence as firmly as if I saw it bodily with my eyes.” I do not hesitate to assert, that the majority of our young ecclesiastics, on leaving the seminary, would be disposed to hold similar language under similar circumstances. Such is the state of belief to which it is possible at length to arrive by willing that one should believe; by continually repeating to one's self “I believe.”

I hope, sir, that your readers can now understand the two things which I proposed to myself to show in this letter—viz., how it happens that (at least in France) a Roman Priest may be sincere in his teaching, and in what sense it is true that he is a man of faith.

I am, with respect,

Your very humble servant,

C. MIEL.

PURGATORY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—Permit me to make a few remarks on that point of Mr. Edmond Power's letter, in your last (No. 35, p. 135), which refers to myself.

The object of my previous letter (No. 31, p. 86) was to expose misquotations made by two of your Roman Catholic correspondents in their endeavour to prove “that the doctrine of Purgatory was taught by the early Fathers.” As Mr. Power has not attempted a justification on this head, I presume that he admits the accuracy of my references. He, however, calls in question one of my statements. He writes—

“Mr. Collette undertakes to disprove Purgatory! and in order to make this conclusion available to the end he proposes, he tells those for whose edification he writes, by an egregious mistake, no doubt, that, ‘according to the modern Roman doctrine, all the faithful—all those who die in the faith of Christ—go to Purgatory, before they can be in a fit condition to appear before God.’” Mr. Power then desires to know whence I learned this novel feature. He does not, however, deny such to be the teaching of his Church. He will admit that his Church makes a broad distinction between those who die in mortal and those in venial sins. Those who die in mortal sin go “to hell for all eternity” (Dr. Doyle's Abridgment of Christian Doctrine), and those who die in venial sins, we are told, “go to Purgatory till they have made full satisfaction for them, and then to heaven.” Then we read in the Catechism of the Council of Trent—“Besides this (namely, hell), there is a *purgatorial fire*, where the souls of the pious are, for a certain time, expiated by suffering, by which an entrance may be gained to the eternal abodes, into which nothing unclean can enter.”*

Pope Gregory I. (if, indeed, the work attributed to him by Romanists be genuine) stated, that the fire of Purgatory was for those only who had committed “*peccata minuta atque levissima*.”†

Now, I believe Mr. Power will admit that those who die in venial sin, and the “pious,” such as stated in the Cate-

* Cat. Conc. Trid., pars i., cap. iv., Quest. iii., p. 50. Lips. 1851.
† Gregor. Magn. Dialog., Lib. iv., c. 39.